

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-17 and 19-35 are pending in the application. By this Amendment, claim 10 has been amended and new claims 29-35 have been added.

Applicants respectfully note that Examiner Nasri indicated to Applicants' representative during a personal interview conducted on December 5, 2005 that independent claims 4 and 7 define over the art of record and claim 1 would overcome the art of record following a proposed amendment presented during the personal interview (see Interview Summary). However, in the subject Office Action, the Leong reference is maintained by the Examiner and applied against all the claims (with the exception of claim 12). Applicants respectfully submit that the current assessment of the Leong reference should have been provided during the previous office action and/or the personal interview so Applicants could have addressed such assessment in the December 7, 2005 Amendment. By not providing a clear understanding of the Examiner's position, the Examiner is hindering the advancement of prosecution.

Applicants respectfully acknowledge the indication that claim 12 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims should be allowable.

Claims 1-3, 10-11, 13-17, 19, 21, 25 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) by Leong et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,713,752). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is directed to a plug retaining assembly including a plug including a lug, a socket to interface with the plug, and a retaining clip including a lug engaging mechanism structured to allow disengagement of the plug from the socket at a predetermined release force applied to the

plug. The retaining clip is movably positioned with respect to the socket for movement between a non-plug-retaining position, and a plug-retaining position wherein a sloping surface of the lug engaging mechanism engages the lug. The sloping surface has an angle that is at least partially determinative of the predetermined release force. The retaining clip is movable between the non-plug-retaining position and the plug-retaining position while the plug is engaged with the socket.

As noted in paragraph 3 of the Office Action and illustrated in the marked-up Fig. 1 of Leong, the Office Action identifies (10') of Leong as a plug, (40', 41') as a lug, (10) as a socket, (40, 40a, 40b) as a retaining clip, and (41) as a lug engaging mechanism having a sloping surface. The Office Action alleges that the lug engaging mechanism (41) is structured to allow disengagement of the plug from the socket at a predetermined release force applied to the plug, and that the sloping surface of the lug engaging mechanism (41) has an angle that is at least partially determinative of the predetermined release force. Applicants respectfully disagree with this analysis.

As stated in col. 3, lines 43-49 of Leong, "when an excessive external force is applied to the latchable electrical connector 10, the latch device 40 comes out of the latch receiving recess 23 as long as the tensile force exceeds the engagement force between the circular tongues 44 and the arcuate section 24 in the latch receiving recess 23 as best shown in FIG. 3. Note that the hooks 41, 41' remain engaged ..." Thus, the tongues 44 and the arcuate section 24 of Leong allow disengagement and determine the release force, not the hooks 41, 41' which remain engaged. Accordingly, the lug engaging mechanism (41) identified in the Office Action is not structured to allow disengagement of the plug from the socket at a predetermined release force applied to the plug as recited in claim 1, and the sloping surface of the lug engaging mechanism

(41) identified in the Office Action does not have an angle that is at least partially determinative of the predetermined release force as recited in claim 1.

Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 3, 13-17, 19, 21, 25, and 26 are allowable by virtue of their dependence on claim 1 and additionally allowable for their recitation of additional patentable subject matter.

Claim 10 has been rewritten into independent form. Leong does not disclose the arrangement of the plug, socket, and retainer as recited in claim 10. For example, Leong does not disclose a plug having a first end and a second end opposite the first end, wherein the second end includes a lug and a socket having a receptacle receives the first end as recited in claim 10. In contrast, the plug (10') identified in the Office Action includes a lug (40') on the same end that engages the socket (10). Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 10 is respectfully requested.

Claim 11 is allowable by virtue of its dependence on claim 10 and additionally allowable for its recitation of additional patentable subject matter.

Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Leong et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 20 should be allowable by virtue of its dependence on claim 1 and additionally allowable for its recitation of additional patentable subject matter.

Claims 4-9, 23-24, 27 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Leong et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action acknowledges that Leong does not describe the method as claimed. Then, the Office Action alleges that the claimed method is counter part of the apparatus claimed, and therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to develop a particular method for the disclosed apparatus of the cited references. Applicants respectfully disagree with this analysis.

First, all the limitations of a claim must be considered when weighing the differences between the claimed invention and the prior art in determining the obviousness of a method claim. See MPEP 2143.03. Thus, each method step must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art.

Second, Leong does not teach or suggest a retaining clip including a lug engaging mechanism having a wedge angle adapted to allow disengagement of the plug from the socket at a predetermined release force as recited in claims 4 and 7. As noted above, the lug engaging mechanism (41) identified in the Office Action is not associated with the release force.

Third, Leong does not teach or suggest selecting the wedge angle in accordance with the predetermined release force as recited in claim 4. Leong fails to disclose the selection of a wedge angle.

Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 4 and 7 is respectfully requested.

Claims 5, 6, 22, and 27 are allowable by virtue of their dependence on claim 4 and additionally allowable for their recitation of additional patentable subject matter. Claims 8, 9, 23, 24, and 28 are allowable by virtue of their dependence on claim 7 and additionally allowable for their recitation of additional patentable subject matter.

New claims 29-35 have been added. Entry and allowance of these new claims is respectfully requested.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are patentable and that the entire application is in condition for allowance.


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Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable to place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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